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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
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INFO RHHMUNA/USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE 2310  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0334  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE  
RUEHRO/USMISSION UN ROME IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 002231

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

BANGKOK FOR USAID /OFDA REGIONAL ADVISOR A. DWYER  
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JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR J3/J4/J5  
PACOM FOR J3/J4/J5  
NSC FOR P. MARCHAM

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAD](#) [SOCI](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [SENV](#) [EAGR](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: PHILIPPINES RETHINKS DISASTER STRATEGY AS TYPHOON NEARS  
LUZON

REFTELS: A) Manila 2155 B) Manila 2140

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Threatened by a third typhoon in four weeks, the Philippine government has prepositioned emergency supplies, equipment and personnel in northern Luzon in the event Typhoon Ramil (international name Lupit) makes landfall there this weekend. U.S. military forces and equipment from the recently concluded Philippines Bilateral Exercise (TALON VISION/PHIBLEX), many of whom assisted victims of earlier storms, remain in the area to respond to a possible request for humanitarian assistance from the Philippine government. USAID has contributed over \$6 million in aid to date, and continues to provide humanitarian assistance to flood victims. In a discussion with the Ambassador October 22, President Arroyo voiced deep appreciation for U.S. assistance, and Secretary of National Defense Teodoro lauded the outstanding contributions of U.S. military and assistance agencies. The Philippine government is restructuring its disaster relief bureaucracy, and the U.S. Mission is engaged on long term recovery options. End Summary.

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"Done Everything Possible to Prepare for Typhoon Ramil"  
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¶2. (SBU) While still recovering from the massive destruction inflicted by tropical storm Ondoy (international name Ketsana) and Typhoon Pepeng (Parma) (reftels A and B), which left more than 850 dead and caused hundreds of millions in damage, Philippine authorities are prepositioning relief supplies, equipment, and personnel in those areas of northern Luzon likely to be hit by Typhoon Ramil(Lupit) this weekend. National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) spokesmen reported that government agencies had delivered 114,000 kilograms of food and non-food items to local field offices, prepositioned medical support in northern Luzon hospitals and brought seven inflatable boats and three 20-ton trucks to northern Luzon. According to NDCC reports, approximately 40,000 police, firefighters, and public works personnel are on call in targeted areas. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has

activated its primary disaster relief battalion, and the Philippine Air Force has positioned two cargo aircraft to deliver relief supplies to the northern Batan Islands, likely to suffer the brunt of the storm. NDCC spokesman Lt. Col. Ernesto Torres Jr. noted that "we've done everything possible to prepare for Typhoon Ramil."

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U.S. Troops Finish Exercises, Poised to Help  
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13. (SBU) U.S. military units, many of whom assisted victims of tropical storm Ondoy and Typhoon Pepeng (reftels A and B), concluded participation in the Philippines Bilateral Exercise (TALON VISION/PHIBLEX) on October 22 and elements remain in place pending a possible request for humanitarian assistance from the Philippine government. The U.S. naval vessels Harpers Ferry, Tortuga, and Denver, currently docked at Subic Bay, possess helicopter lift capability and could be deployed to northern Luzon upon request. Some elements of the Third Marine Expeditionary Force (III MEF) ground and air assets and personnel are also in place to respond to a request for assistance.

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USAID Assistance Tops \$6 Million  
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14. (SBU) To date, USAID has provided approximately \$6 million to aid victims of previous storms, including \$4 million in grants to relief organizations, \$700,000 in non-food supplies, and \$500,000 for logistics and transportation support. Water, sanitation, and hygiene are current priorities. USAID is supporting the provision of latrines in evacuation centers and flooded areas, the improvement

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of water delivery systems, and hygiene education, and plans an additional \$1 million in assistance towards meeting these needs. In addition, 720 metric tons of vegetable oil worth \$1.2 million from USAID's Food for Peace program are scheduled to arrive in the next few days. In recognition of its expertise, the Philippine government has requested that USAID join the UN/Philippine government water cluster technical working group to assess water issues, including water borne disease. In recent weeks, almost 140 people have died and 2,000 have been hospitalized as a result of leptospirosis, an infectious bacterial disease facilitated by unsanitary conditions brought about by Ondoy flooding.

15. (SBU) In cooperation with the Philippines Department of Education, USAID is assessing the damage to schools in Metro Manila and is prepared to provide assistance in the form of rehabilitation, classroom furniture, and educational materials.

16. (SBU) The Consular Section issued a warden message regarding Typhoon Ramil (Lupit) on October 19. To date staff has received no reports or inquiries of American citizens in areas of northern Luzon expected to be impacted by Typhoon Ramil (Lupit).

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Government Restructuring Disaster Management  
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17. (SBU) During a U.S. business event October 22, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo expressed deep gratitude to the Ambassador for the wide array of help provided by the U.S. government to storm victims.

Secretary of National Defense Gilberto Teodoro lauded the U.S. effort in a breakfast meeting that same day with the Ambassador, citing the superb contributions of U.S. military forces as well as USAID and other U.S. agencies.

18. (SBU) The Philippine government is considering various measures to improve its disaster response capabilities. One bill recently passed by the lower house - The Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction Act - would replace the current NDCC, which convenes only when need arises, with a permanent body, the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC). Supporters contend that the NDRRMC would be more proactive in terms of risk management, as full-time staff could focus on longer-term issues, including urban planning. The executive branch is also considering two executive orders to mitigate flooding and flood damage. One order would relocate residents of flood-prone areas near waterways, while the other would create a river basin council composed of dam operators and local governments of downstream watersheds to coordinate water release

from dams.

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Next Steps: Beyond Relief to Reconstruction  
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19. (SBU) Post, in consultation with USAID/OFDA and the U.S. military, is considering a number of future disaster preparedness options. Visiting World Food Program (WFP) Head, Josette Sheeran, told Ambassador and Acting USAID Mission Director that WFP believes immediate relief assistance will be needed for several more months. Post is also engaging international organizations in discussions regarding long term recovery measures. For example, USAID has offered to provide technical support to the World Bank Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) team, which is currently assessing the Philippines' long- term reconstruction requirements. In preparation for the approaching Typhoon Ramil (Lupit), USAID/OFDA staff has extended their stay in country to monitor the situation and coordinate a possible USG response.  
Kenney